

Black Americans have had higher levels of COVID-19-related unemployment.

Beyond the pandemic, other challenges remain. Systemic racism persists in our economy, in our schools, in our healthcare system, and, of course, in our criminal justice system, just to mention a few. And even as we strive as a nation to achieve our high ideals of liberty and freedom for all, we must openly acknowledge a history of discrimination and racism and reckon with its present-day manifestations and implications, including disturbing efforts around the country to turn back the clock on voting rights.

It is only the challenges brought about by adversity that occasion the rise of resiliency and the triumphs of the human spirit and of community action that can lift all of us.

The late Member of Congress, Shirley Chisholm, once said:

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Following a year of difficult challenges, it is fitting that as part of our Black History Month celebration, we honor innovative, courageous, and enterprising Pennsylvania leaders who have both the vision and the courage to help our communities and our Commonwealth to exhibit resilience in the face of that adversity.

TRIBUTE TO TY HOLMES

Mr. President, let me start with Ty Holmes, our first honoree. I am proud to honor Ty as a fellow resident of Scranton, and the President of the Lackawanna branch of the NAACP. Ty Holmes is well known in Scranton as an avid volunteer and advocate for diversity and inclusion through his work with multiple community organizations, including as a Penn State advisory board member, the vice president of the Scranton Rotary, and as a Lackawanna County Democratic Committee member.

Following the death of George Floyd in 2020, community members were inspired to make change in Northeastern Pennsylvania and establish the Lackawanna County NAACP. Since its founding in 2020, this NAACP branch has grown to 131 members. Under Ty Holmes' leadership, the branch is working to be a voice for underrepresented groups and serve as a bridge between them and the broader community in Scranton.

Ty also has a particular interest in bettering the lives of young people in Scranton, leading him to run for the Scranton School Board. This past November, he was elected to the board and sworn in last month. With his election, Ty Holmes becomes the first African American to ever be elected to public office in the city of Scranton. He also serves as a board member for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Youth Shelter, which provides quality emergency shelter and related services to

unaccompanied youth, ages 14 through their high school graduation.

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Youth Shelter has a specific focus on social justice and advocacy and is welcoming to young people from all backgrounds, especially LGBTQ+ youth in the area.

Ty Holmes' life has been one of service, both to his community and to his country. He retired after 25 years of Active Duty in the U.S. military, where he received numerous decorations from both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army. He began his military career in 1991 with the Navy and served in various duty stations throughout the South Pacific and the Middle East.

In 2003, he crossed branches and entered the U.S. Army, deploying in the Middle East. He also worked as part of the support and rescue operations in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Through his work with many community organizations and his role on the Scranton School District Board of Directors, Ty continues to build the Scranton institutions that provide support to people and those institutions that lift them up during times of adversity.

So I look forward to seeing Ty Holmes' continuing contributions to my hometown for years to come.

TRIBUTE TO DELLA CLARK

Mr. President, our second honoree is Della Clark from Philadelphia, PA. Della Clark is a true community shepherd. I am not the first to recognize Della's exemplary work, and I certainly won't be the last, but I am honored to add my voice to her chorus of admirers. Her work in the city of Philadelphia, particularly in West Philadelphia, has undoubtedly been a saving grace 100 times over.

Della is indefatigable, a true force of nature who has shown true dedication and steadfast leadership.

Since January 1, 1992, Della Clark has served as president of the Enterprise Center. This center supports minority entrepreneurs and underresourced communities and is one of the most trusted organizations in the region to advise and deliver transformative economic development and community wealth-building initiatives.

Under Della's leadership, the Enterprise Center has experienced tremendous growth. Among its accomplishments is its purchase of a dilapidated building at 46th and Market Street in West Philadelphia, which was completely renovated and now serves as the center's state-of-the-art center for business and entrepreneurship.

Additionally, affiliate organizations have been added to the center's portfolio, including the Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation and the Enterprise Center Capital Corporation. Today, the Enterprise Center is leading a project that will be transformative for the city of Philadelphia—the 52nd Street Initiative.

This commercial corridor along 52nd Street in West Philadelphia has been

an important historical and cultural hub, but unfortunately has seen significant decline and recent disinvestment just over the last number of years.

Further exacerbating the already existing troubles for business owners and residents, the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest have made recovery and revitalization challenging at best. The Enterprise Center has a bold vision for this 52nd Street Initiative, which will transform this street—52nd Street—into a national model for integrating technology to improve public safety, enhance visitor experience, and support businesses and residents.

With Della Clark at the helm, I am confident she will move mountains to see to it that this project reaches its full potential and that this vital neighborhood and its residents can thrive once again.

Della Clark speaks eloquently—yet fiercely—on the importance of investing in Black and Brown businesses and is a tireless advocate for equitable distribution of and access to resources and capital. For that, I thank her for being a champion, a leader, and a true servant for her community.

TRIBUTE TO JULIUS BOATWRIGHT

Mr. President, in Southwestern Pennsylvania, our third honoree is Julius Boatwright. Not only has the pandemic taken a toll on the Nation's physical health, but many Americans struggle with mental health challenges, particularly isolation and grief. Julius Boatwright knows that good mental health is fundamental, foundational, to overall well-being.

He has made delivering critical mental health services his life's work. At a time when the pandemic has left many Americans feeling isolated, alone, and depressed, Julius's mission has renewed urgency.

In his work as a licensed social worker, community-based therapist, and outpatient therapist, Julius Boatwright has led with profound vulnerability and understanding. His passion for mental health is derived from a deeply personal place. Julius has bravely discussed his own mental health struggles in an effort to open up a conversation about mental well-being. His experience of growing up in a household and a community where mental health was never talked about planted the desire for him to address silent suffering.

In college, the death of a friend by suicide could have disrupted Julius's journey to becoming a mental health professional. Instead, this deeply personal challenge spurred him onward. He would go on to earn a bachelor's degree in communications and a master's of social work, with a certificate in human services management, from the University of Pittsburgh, as well as establish the Pittsburgh-based nonprofit Steel Smiling.

Julius is now the founding and managing director of Steel Smiling. The organization's mission is to bridge the gap between Black people and mental

health support through education, advocacy, and awareness. Steel Smiling has an ambitious goal, to connect every Black person in Pittsburgh to a positive mental health experience that improves their quality of life by the year 2030.

Julius's empathy and vision is encouraging and inspiring, and I look forward to witnessing the transformative impact of his work. Steel Smiling has already begun to improve the mental well-being of Pittsburgh's Black community. Since 2019, the organization has been a significant provider of community services, helping Black Pittsburghers to receive mental health treatment, training, and support.

The implementation of culturally sensitive programs, trainings, and workshops have helped combat the cultural stigma that exists in Black and Brown communities surrounding mental health.

The need for sensitive, stigma-free mental health support has been a longstanding one, but there has been a long gap between the need for services and the availability of them.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has even more starkly illustrated the critical need for behavioral health services, especially for people of color. So I am grateful to Julius for not just recognizing the need but for stepping up and working to address critical community need.

(Ms. SMITH assumed the chair.)

TRIBUTE TO THEO BRADY

Madam President, finally, Theo Brady, our fourth honoree.

Theo is from Harrisburg, PA, and he is the personification of resilience in the face of adversity, and I am honored to recognize him today.

At the age of 15, Theo was involved in an accident while playing high school football, and the resulting neck injury left him paralyzed and a wheelchair user. This life-changing experience would become a catalyst for his future work in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

After his accident, Theo moved to Pennsylvania and completed high school. He furthered his education by graduating from Edinboro University in Erie County, and then he earned his master's degree in social work from Temple University in 1988.

Later that year, Theo Brady established and became the founding director of the Center for Independent Living of Central Pennsylvania, a position he held for over 30 years. As CEO, Theo was instrumental in creating an independent living center that would become a strong and vibrant voice for people with disabilities in central Pennsylvania and, indeed, throughout the Commonwealth.

Under Theo's leadership, the Center for Independent Living of Central Pennsylvania not only provided essential services for people with disabilities but has also advocated for accessible transportation, more access to assistive technology, and expanded home- and community-based services.

Theo crafted his leadership role to both create services for people with disabilities and to advocate to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

In addition to his work leading the center, Theo has served on numerous boards and committees over his career, influencing disability policy.

He was appointed by three different Governors of Pennsylvania to serve as a commissioner for the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. Theo also served on the Pennsylvania State-wide Independent Living Council.

He has taken his years of service and advocacy to the classroom to help shape the disability leaders of the future, teaching at several institutions of higher education. For example, in 2019, after leading the Center for Independent Living of Central Pennsylvania for those 30 years, Theo retired to begin his next venture. Today, Theo serves as president of his own consulting firm.

I have had the opportunity to work with Theo on a number of disability issues over the years, and his professional and personal knowledge about the importance of home- and community-based services has been invaluable in shaping meaningful policy and communicating it to Members of Congress.

For over 40 years, Theo has proudly and inclusively served the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with his advocacy for people with disabilities. We are grateful for his commitment to making our State and our Nation fairer and more accessible for all.

In conclusion, it is a privilege and a pleasure to be able to honor these remarkable Pennsylvanians: Ty Holmes, Della Clark, Julius Boatwright, and Theo Brady. While their work as repairers of the breach varies from community activism and youth development to economic development, to mental health support, to the civil rights of people with disabilities, all four share a commitment to lifting up their neighbors and their neighborhoods. They believe that we are stronger when we stand together and that, by joining hands with our brothers and sisters, we can overcome adversity, build resilience, and flourish together.

As we head toward the light at the end of the tunnel of this pandemic and continue to strive to ensure the ideals of our Nation are fulfilled for all Americans, the stories of these exceptional leaders will continue to inspire all of us to pursue a brighter tomorrow for America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

UKRAINE

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I come to the floor tonight with my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN, to discuss the critical situation in Ukraine.

Ukraine is an independent country. It is a democracy. It is an ally of ours. It is a country that is currently under siege. There is a threat of invasion by Russia that grows every single day.

Right now, there are more than 130,000 Russian troops under the command of 100 tactical groups surrounding Ukraine. This Russian deployment includes nuclear-capable missiles, rockets, tanks, and artillery, and it is no longer just on the eastern border of Ukraine, where there has been activity before, as we will discuss, but now on the northern border, where Russian combat troops and heavy equipment have moved into the country of Belarus and also in Crimea. Additionally, Russia has now deployed amphibious assault ships and other ships into the Black Sea, to the south, and has positioned its S-400 missile defense systems, which could stop flights into Ukraine.

So from the east, from the north, and from the south, Ukraine is facing this threat. News accounts say additional equipment is actually being moved to the Ukrainian border, not being pulled away.

While there are differing views on whether Russia has made the final decision as to whether to invade or not, there is no question that they have now amassed the capability needed to conduct a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Let's not forget that Russia has invaded Ukraine twice in the past 8 years, illegally annexing Crimea and inserting troops and offensive military equipment into the Donbas region in the east.

They have also targeted cyber attacks against public and private entities in Ukraine and continue to use information to try to destabilize the democratically elected Government of Ukraine.

By the way, Ukrainians have lost about 14,000 citizens in the last 5 years at the hands of the Russians—14,000—fathers, brothers. That would be, as a percentage of our population, like the United States losing about 115,000 people. That is more than we lost in Vietnam and Korea combined—actually, Vietnam, Korea, Iraq, and Afghanistan combined. Think how we would feel.

And let's not forget that Russia continues, day by day, to conduct this low-grade but serious war against Ukraine.

We all hope that instead of an invasion, Russia chooses a diplomatic end to this current crisis, but we had better treat this threat of an invasion as a very real and serious possibility. Doing anything else would be irresponsible, given the massive mobilization and the past malign behavior.

And all freedom-loving countries have an interest here. Ukraine is where the cause of freedom is under siege today in our generation.

Eight years ago, Ukrainians made a very deliberate choice. They stood up to a corrupt Russian-backed government, and they turned to the West, to the European Union, to America. They said that they wanted to be like us.

I was in Ukraine in 2014 shortly after what is called the "Euromaidan," the revolution of dignity. The barricades